

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00
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PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 IO-13 AID-05 PC-01 /115 W
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P R 240748Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9127
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 3215

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, ET, TZ
SUBJ: PRESIDENT NYERERE'S VIEWS ON ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT NYERERE INFORMED AMBASSADOR HE FOUND NO
SUPPORT BY ANY COUNTRY AT KHARTOUM OAU CONFERENCE FOR SECES-
SION OF ERITREA. HE SAID HE HAD JUST TOLD MENGISTU THAT HE
AND ETHIOPIANS SHOULD NOT TRY TO FRIGHTEN US, A SUPER-
POWER, WHICH NYERERE IMPLIED HE HAD TOLD MENGISTU HE NEEDED.
US SHOULD NOT FRIGHTEN ETHIOPIA. "OUR FREEDOM AND INDE-
PENDENCE ARE TOO NEW AND TOO SWEET TO SURRENDER THEM TO
ANYONE," NYERERE SAID. HE NOTED THAT EGYPT, THE SUDAN, AND
SOMALIA HAD ALL THROWN OUT THE RUSSIANS AND HE IMPLIED
THAT ETHIOPIA WOULD DO SO ALSO ONCE ITS DIFFICULTIES IN
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THE NORTH HAD BEEN SETTLED. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS FOR
ALL OF US TO EMPHASIZE TO ETHIOPIA THAT WE CONSIDERED
ERITREA PART OF ETHIOPIA AND OPPOSED SECESSION. ONCE WE
HAD CONVINCED ETHIOPIA OF THIS, WE SHOULD PRESS THEM UN-
CEASINGLY TO REACH A PEACEFUL SOLUTION. THIS WAS WHAT HE
HAD SAID IN ESSENCE TO MENGISTU. NYERERE ASKED HIS AMBAS-
SADOR TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH EMBASSY. END SUMMARY.

1. TOWARD CLOSE OF RECEPTION GIVEN BY CHAIRMAN MENGISTU FOR PRESIDENT NYERERE, HIS DELEGATION, HIGH ETHIOPIAN OFFICIALS AND CHIEFS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, AMBASSADOR HAD OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN SMALL KNOT OF WESTERN DIPLOMATS, INCLUDING CANADIAN WHO HAD OBVIOUSLY KNOWN NYERERE BEFORE. THESE FADED AWAY, LEAVING AMBASSADOR ALONE WITH NYERERE AND HIS AMBASSADOR FOR ABOUT SIX MINUTES. NYERERE BEGAN BY SAYING THAT HE HAD FOUND NO ONE FROM ANY COUNTRY AT THE KHARTOUM OAU CONFERENCE OF CHIEFS OF STATE WHO SUPPORTED THE CONCEPT OF SECESSION FOR ERITREA.

2. NYERERE SAID HE HAD TOLD MENGISTU IN HIS CONVERSATION EARLIER IN THE AFTERNOON THAT HE SHOULD NOT TRY TO FRIGHTEN THE UNITED STATES, A SUPERPOWER. NYERERE CLEARLY IMPLIED HE HAD TOLD MENGISTU ETHIOPIA NEEDED US ASSISTANCE AND FRIENDSHIP. I COMMENTED THAT I HAD TOLD MENGISTU WHEN PRESENTING CREDENTIALS THAT US WISHED TO IMPROVE RELATIONS AND PROVIDE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE PROJECTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHICH WOULD BENEFIT THE POOREST PEASANTS. I ADDED THAT OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE RECOGNIZED THE ULTIMATE RIGHT OF REVOLUTION AND THAT I HAD TOLD MENGISTU THAT WE COULD SYMPATHIZE WITH SOME OF THE SOCIAL OBJECTIVES OF ETHIOPIA'S REVOLUTION. NYERERE SAID THAT WAS ALL TO THE GOOD, AND HE WAS A PROFOUND STUDENT OF OUR HISTORY.

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3. THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT FRIGHTEN "THESE PEOPLE," NYERERE CONTINUED RATHER PATERNALLY, GESTURING TOWARD WHERE MENGISTU AND A GROUP OF HIS ASSOCIATES STOOD. EGYPT, THE SUDAN, AND SOMALIA HAD THROWN OUT THE SOVIETS, AND "OUR FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE ARE TOO NEW AND TOO SWEET TO SURRENDER THEM TO ANYONE." ETHIOPIA HAD DIFFICULTIES IN ERITREA, BUT ONCE THESE WERE RESOLVED, WE WOULD SEE. HE CLEARLY IMPLIED ETHIOPIA WOULD EXPEL THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS.

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
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INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 3215

4. THE IMPORTANT ISSUE, NYERERE CONTINUED, WAS TO CONVINCE MENGISTU AND ETHIOPIANS GENERALLY THAT WE CONSIDERED ERITREA PART OF ETHIOPIA AND OPPOSED SECESSION. WE SHOULD ALL WORK TOWARD THIS GOAL. ONCE WE HAD CONVINCED THE ETHIOPIANS OF OUR POSITION, WE SHOULD PRESS THEM UNCEASINGLY TO BRING ABOUT A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM. I INFORMED NYERERE THAT I TOLD MENGISTU WHEN PRESENTING CREDENTIALS THAT WE RECOGNIZED ERITREA AS PART OF ETHIOPIA AND HAD SAID WE ADVOCATED A PEACEFUL SOLUTION THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. NYERERE NODDED APPROVAL AND ASKED HIS AMBASSADOR, WHO HAD BEEN THE ONLY OTHER PARTICIPANT THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION, TO KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH ME. NYERERE THEN REJOINED MENGISTU AND OTHER ETHIOPIAN LEADERS.

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5. CHECKING SEPARATELY WITH THE BRITISH AND ITALIAN AMBASSADORS WHO HAD A FEW MINUTES OF PRIVATE CONVERSATION TOGETHER WITH NYERERE BEFORE I DID, I FOUND THAT NYERERE HAD STRESSED THE ERITREAN SITUATION BUT WITH A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT TWIST. HE SAID THAT HE HAD TALKED TO NUMAYRI AND SADAT AND BOTH OF THEM NO LONGER FAVORED SECESSION AS A SOLUTION IN ERITREA. NYERERE TOLD MY TWO COLLEAGUES, HOWEVER, THAT HE RECOGNIZED THAT FURTHER MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE ERITREAN GUERRILLAS BY THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT WAS INEVITABLE BUT THAT THERE SHOULD NOT BE A "HARD MILITARY SOLUTION" (WHATEVER THAT MEANS). BOTH AMBASSADORS CONCURRED THAT NYERERE HAD USED THIS PRECISE PHRASE.

6. PMGSE LEADERS AND CHIEFS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS WERE LINED UP ON THE TARMAC AT THE AIRPORT JULY 23 TO BID FAREWELL TO NYERERE. AS HE CAME DOWN THE LINE UNDER A SLIGHT DRIZZLE, I SAID ROUTINELY TO NYERERE, "I ENJOYED OUR CONVERSATION, MR. PRESIDENT." EVER THE TEACHED, HE STOPPED, TOOK HIS HAND OUT OF MINE, PUNCHED ME LIGHTLY IN THE CHEST, AND SAID, "SO DID I; KEEP IN TOUCH." THIS WAS EVIDENTLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE SMILING MENGISTU WHO CAME RIGHT BEHIND, BUT IT WAS ALSO NOT LOST ON THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO MY RIGHT NOR THE RUMANIAN CHARGE ON MY LEFT AND WAS EVEN COMMENTED ON BY THE VENEZUELAN CHARGE DOWN THE LINE AND THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR, WELL UP THE LINE. COMMENT: IT WAS NOT THE PERSON GREETED NOR THE VERBAL CONTENT, BUT THE RECOGNITION OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF A "SUPERPOWER," TO USE NYERERE'S OWN WORD.
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